

**An earlier name for the mangrove diamondback terrapin,  
*Malaclemys terrapin rhizophorarum* (Reptilia: Testudines: Emydidae)**

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*Abstract.*—The name *Malaclemys tuberculifera* Gray, 1844 is shown to predate the currently used name for the mangrove terrapin, *Malaclemys terrapin rhizophorarum*. In addition, the type locality of *tuberculifera* is shown to be in error.

The mangrove diamondback terrapin, *Malaclemys terrapin rhizophorarum*, is restricted to the Florida Keys (Conant & Collins 1991) and was described and named *Malaclemmys littoralis rhizophorarum* (= *Malaclemys terrapin rhizophorarum*) by Fowler in 1906. However, this may not be the earliest available scientific name.

A recent examination of the holotype of *Malaclemys tuberculifera* Gray, 1844, The Natural History Museum, London (BMNH) 1947.3.5.29 (38H), a mounted juvenile shell (carapace length 79.2 mm), reveals that this specimen possesses all shell characters used to define *Malaclemys t. rhizophorarum* (Fowler 1906). The carapace of *M. t. rhizophorarum* is best characterized by the bulbous knobs on its medial keel, its oblong shape, and dark scutes that lack light centers; its plastron seams have dark borders (Fowler 1906, Schwartz 1955, Ernst & Bury 1982, Ernst et al. 1994). The plastron of adults may be entirely or almost entirely dark (Carr 1946, 1952). The holotype of *M. tuberculifera* Gray, 1844 has a dark, oblong carapace (widest at the level of the eighth marginals), and knobs on vertebrals 2–4, with those of vertebrals 3–4 very bulbous. Both its light yellow plastron and bridge have dark seams, and there are dark speckles on the bridge. The plastron is not entirely dark like that of many adults,

but the plastron of this subspecies sometimes darkens with age.

Unfortunately, the head and soft parts are unavailable for the holotype of *M. tuberculifera*. These bear distinctive characters in *M. t. rhizophorarum*: the head is streaked with dark marks, the jaws are whitish-cream, the dark spots on the neck coalesce to form streaks, and the hind limbs are longitudinally streaked.

Because of the match of the shell characters of *M. tuberculifera* with those of *M. t. rhizophorarum*, the two represent a single taxon. The name *Malaclemys tuberculifera* is the senior synonym, predating that of *Malaclemys littoralis rhizophorarum* by 62 years. Gray used the name *tuberculifera* again in 1856 and 1873 to denote one of his four varieties of *Malaclemys concentrica* (= *Malaclemys terrapin*), but Boulenger (1889) listed the holotype of *M. tuberculifera* among the specimens of *Malacoclemmys terrapin* (= *M. terrapin*), in the collection of the British Museum (Natural History). His action relegated the name *Malaclemys tuberculifera* to the synonymy of the species name, *terrapin*. Since then, it has appeared only as a synonym of the species, and constitutes a nomen oblitum. Since 1906, when Fowler described it, only the name *rhizophorarum* has been used for the Florida Keys population of diamondback terrapins (Stejneger & Barbour 1917, 1923;

Carr 1940, 1946, 1952; Johnson 1952, Schmidt 1953, Carr & Goin 1955, Schwartz 1955, Duellman & Schwartz 1958, Wermuth & Mertens 1961, 1977; Ernst & Barbour 1972, 1989; Godley 1978, Pritchard 1979, Ernst & Bury 1982, Ashton & Ashton 1985, Iverson 1985, Conant 1986, Obst 1986, Müller 1987, Conant & Collins 1991, Iverson 1992, Lamb & Avise 1992, Wood 1992, David 1994, Ernst et al. 1994, Seigel & Gibbons 1995, Bartlett & Bartlett 1999). Because of this almost 100-year usage, we believe that, in spite of the seniority of *tuberculifera*, the name *rhizophorarum* should continue to be used for this turtle. In compliance with Article 23.9 of the Code of Zoological Nomenclature, a petition has been submitted [*Rhizophorarum* Fowler, 1906 (Reptilia: Testudines): proposed conservation] to the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature requesting the suppression of the name *Malaclemys tuberculifera* Gray, 1844 to conserve the more commonly known name *Malaclemmys littoralis rhizophorarum* Fowler, 1906.

Gray (1844) gave the type-locality of *M. tuberculifera* as "California" and stated the specimen came from "Mr. J. Drummond's collection." Schmidt (1953) restricted the type-locality to the "Philadelphia market," Pennsylvania, apparently on the assumption that the name *tuberculifera* was a synonym of the species name *terrapin*, and so also of the northern nominate subspecies, *M. t. terrapin*. Because the name *tuberculifera* denotes the subspecies occurring in the Florida Keys, these two type-localities are erroneous. However, the designation of a "correct" type-locality seems unnecessary.

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